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STATE FOR AF/W AND NEA/MAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/16/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [MR](#) [MO](#)  
SUBJECT: MAURITANIAN ENVOY EXPLAINS COUP TO GOM

Classified By: DCM Robert P. Jackson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) During a long September 16 briefing on Western Sahara (septel), Moroccan Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri told the Perm 5 Ambassadors and Charges, as well as the Spanish Ambassador, that King Mohammed VI and he had met new Mauritanian Foreign Minister Mohamed Mahmoud Ould Mohamedou in Casablanca and Rabat on September 15 and 16, respectively.

Fassi Fihri related that the Mauritanian envoy had explained that what had transpired was not a coup since most institutions continue to function, and the lack of checks and balances had forced the junta to act. The Moroccans had received assurances that no member of the junta -- nor former President Abdallahi -- would be allowed to run for President.

Building on the road map approved by the parliament on September 14, the Mauritanian Foreign Minister indicated that an election timetable should be established within a month.

¶2. (U) The visit of Ould Mohamedou was extensively reported in the local press. Moroccan media, which has speculated that Morocco may have been behind the coup, reported that King Mohammed VI had voiced strong support for a return to "normal constitutional life" in Mauritania.

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